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DINING AT BENNIGAN'S: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1995

by Bruce Moen

Bruce Moen, graduate of three LIFELINE® programs, has used his skills to make retrieval work a regular avocation. Still, none of his previous experiences quite prepared him for the scope of what awaited in Oklahoma City. This account was written on April 25, 1995, when Bruce's inner turmoil had quieted.

After hearing the news of the explosion at the Oklahoma City federal building, around noon on Wednesday, I briefly thought of using my *LIFELINE* training to help. As twilight fell here in Denver, restlessness drew me out to Bennigan's for dinner and to be with people. After putting in my order for the seafood platter, I thought about Oklahoma City again and quietly expressed my willingness to provide assistance. The plan was to handle it later that night, as usual. As it turned out, doing retrievals in the midst of such an emotionally charged, large-scale disaster was far beyond my previous experiences. Moments after expressing willingness, the voice of Coach—my nonphysical friend—said, "OK Bruce." In the next instant, still sitting on a chair in Bennigan's and completely aware of those surroundings, I was also rushing through blackness toward three infants killed in the blast.

Scooping up the babies in my arms, I shifted straight to the Focus 27 Reception Center. Though I'd never before transported more than one person at a time, it didn't seem much different. Uncles, aunts, and unrelated helpers were waiting to take charge. Accelerating back into the blackness, toward the blast site, I felt brief sadness for such an early loss of life. Several trips back and forth to 27 with young children aged two to eight followed. A woman named Charlotte, who seemed to be in shock, came into view. When she saw me, I told her I'd been sent to bring her back. Despite her dazed state, it registered somewhere in her religious upbringing that this was how it was supposed to be. I handed Charlotte off to someone she recognized and tried, out of habit, to get an identification before heading into the blackness once more.

There were several more adults in rapid succession. A man named Ralph was the last I felt obliged to identify. The sheer numbers had begun to feel overwhelming. At this point I sensed a familiar voice.

[Note: Bruce was part of a team which retrieved victims of the earthquake in India a couple of years ago. While in Virginia, he had participated as a member of the *LIFELINE* research group. Rita Warren, the group leader, had suggested that the group experiment together to learn about assisting after a large-scale disaster.]

The voice advised stopping all the trips back and forth to 27. “Just get their attention, bring them in close, and they will be met by other helpers behind you who will transport them.” “OK,” I said, and turned back toward the blackness. Two large, very bright lights (also recognizable from the India exercise) took up positions on either side of me. Together we moved toward the site. Numbers, names, or anything else about the people who’d died quickly blurred. They just came into view, moved toward us, and were gently received by helpers to be shifted off to 27.

As we continued our work, strong emotions welled up. They had been there all along but not at a level that interfered with the task at hand. I was naively unprepared! As I focused on them briefly, their power and intensity became incredible. The onslaught was from the rescue workers, family members, and other physically alive people at the scene rather than the deceased. Grief and confusion were so strong that my awareness began to waver toward unconsciousness. Anxiety, fear, anger, frustration, and pure rage filled the area. I had to consciously shift my attention off the emotional energy of the physical blast site before reentering the blackness. While scanning for more people, my dearest friend in the physical world came in view. She had also been part of the India *LIFELINE* research group exercise. Now, in Oklahoma City, she was doing the same thing she had done in India. Simply standing there, she maintained a gateway/bridge to 27 for anyone attracted to the Love she was extending. We acknowledged each other, and I moved on with the two bright “light people.”

Suddenly I was aware of someone to the right and downward, buried in the pile of twisted debris that was once the federal building. The previous retrievals had been sort of out in the open. Pushing into and through the debris pile, I scanned back and forth in front of me—searching, searching. We found her. She was lying face down, surrounded and covered by rubble. When I called out to her, she looked over at me and screamed, “Help me get out of here. I’m pinned down, my legs are stuck, and I can’t get free!” I tried to communicate that she was dead and could come to me easily just by thinking about doing it. She would have none of my explanation. She was pinned down by something heavy and that was that. As I pondered how to convince her that she could move, a helper suggested the “seeing it not there” technique for the debris pile. (I do so like the way that sounds, “seeing it not there.”) As I focused on “seeing the debris not there” around the trapped woman, a spherical shape began to appear and be replaced by a dim, whitish, gray light. In a few moments she was floating in a ball shape about two of her body lengths in diameter. From this position she simply moved toward me and was escorted on to 27.

Still accompanied by the bright light people, I continued scanning as we quickly moved through the collapsed building. The “seeing it not there” technique worked repeatedly for every trapped person we found. All interest in counting or identifying had disappeared. Throughout this experience, I was aware of my surroundings in Bennigan’s simultaneously with my activities in Oklahoma City. At times one or the other would fade out, though not completely. My meal was finished in what must have looked like a pretty bemused state to fellow diners. I hastily paid my

bill and, leaving a half-finished beer on the table, headed straight for my Jeep and home. It felt like emotional radiation burns had penetrated deep into my body. Like a sunburn, they felt worse and worse as time passed. Surges of emotion moved through me in crests and troughs like gigantic ocean swells. A wave of grief, rage, anxiety, sadness, or frustration would start and rise upward through my body until I was completely submerged. It was most unpleasant. My control felt nonexistent as each wave crested.

Back at my apartment, I immediately phoned my friend who had provided the gateway/bridge to compare notes. Her first words were, “Oh, the babies.” Grief washed over me anew as she spoke. Through my confusion and disorientation, we discussed the experience. Then, exhausted, sleep beckoned. Fifteen minutes of Tai Chi restored me to some extent. As the emotional energy continued its ebb and flow, I realized that the anguish of the living people at the scene had “stuck” to my nonphysical body and had been carried into physical awareness. Strongly desiring to clear it away, I used a technique learned from another friend.

Relaxing into Focus 10, I envisioned enough spherical, balllike containers to hold anything foreign to my energy field. When it felt like everything had been transferred, I sent each ball back to its rightful owner. The emotional overload finally started to subside. When the process seemed complete, I offered Coach further assistance in Oklahoma. “I think you’ve had enough for now,” he replied. With that, I drifted off to sleep. Portions of Thursday and Friday and most of Saturday were challenging. The waves were fewer and farther between, but it was Sunday before the sea completely calmed. The Oklahoma disaster stimulated every bit of my own unresolved grief, rage, and anxiety. By welcoming the feelings in and expressing them, they dissipated. Monday morning I awoke with a suggestion from Coach: form a Rebal before getting out of bed—a rather intricate one with counter-rotating helixes. Within three or four minutes the last of the emotional “stuff” from Oklahoma cleared away.

Monday was the first day I felt really good again. After half an hour of Tai Chi, I was completely myself. Did I learn anything? Well, I won’t do retrievals from a fresh disaster site in a public place like Bennigan’s! Also, I’ll do more preparation beforehand. Would I attempt such retrievals again? Of course. Each time teaches me more about what it means to be human.